



Connecticut School Counselor Association

A Chartered Division of the American School Counselors Association

Testimony of Lisa Kilcourse
Elementary School Counselor
In support of S.B. No. 1199 and S.B. No. 1197
Education Committee - March 15, 2023

Representative Currey, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, and esteemed members of the Education Committee, my name is Lisa Kilcourse and I am an elementary school counselor in Newtown, CT and Director on the Connecticut School Counselor Association Board of Directors. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony toward SB 1199 and SB 1197.

B. No. 1197 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

I write in support of this bill. This bill can help to break down barriers for our students and provide equitable access to future success in their career development. It will be important that students are provided with all of their options when looking at future planning as well as having access to dual credit. Also by allowing students to be trained as paraeducators while in high school can help build networking and access to working in a school setting. Personally, working as a paraeducator is how I began my career in education. I was able to have my foot in the door to build experience working in a school setting as well as network for my future. Because graduate school is costly I wanted to be able to work while taking my coursework. This was a cost effective way to do so. I not only made great connections for my future but I obtained valuable skills for working in a school setting. I foresee this being a great avenue for future educators in Connecticut. As school counselors, we prioritize providing equitable access to resources universally. This bill helps to maintain the integrity of this process.

***S.B. No. 1199 (RAISED)** AN ACT CONCERNING EQUITY IN EDUCATION.

While I support this bill, it will be important to include school counselors in the language in the bill. Compensating graduate level school counselors during their internships helps to break down barriers and provide equitable access to secondary education. This will allow students to be able to apply and complete graduate programs by being financially compensated for their important work. It also will set the stage to allow for more diverse applicants into school counseling programs. The Connecticut School Counselor Association strives to increase the number of counselors of color in our workforce and it has been mentioned time and time again that the internship requirements without pay are a deterrent and therefore a barrier for many of our prospective counselors of color. Increasing diversity in our schools is important so students can

connect with their educators and school counselors. It is also important for students to see and connect with those of different backgrounds. The Aspiring Educators Diversity Scholarship Program should include funding for those aspiring to be school counselors as well. With an increasing mental health crisis, we are seeing the strain on schools. Students aren't able to find mental health supports outside of school and it falls on our school counselors. We need to be able to provide access to mental health supports even if a student doesn't have it outside of school. Opening up our school counselor pipeline will help to provide mental health access to all of our students.

I appreciate and support the work the CT Education Committee is doing. By allowing school counselors to be involved in the conversation of these bills and taking feedback from those that are counseling students to plan for their future I see it as a great collaboration and path for success. Including school counselors in the language would be a great next step. Our state has fantastic education: k-12, post grad, and college. It's time we look to work to even better and diversify options and plans. Thank you for taking the time to consider our stories and feedback.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Kilcourse". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and a stylized "K".

Lisa Kilcourse
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